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AIR UNIVERSITY

OFFICER COMMISSIONING FOR THE NEXT CENTURY
TRAINING OR EDUCATION?

by

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Preface

Fewer resources foster increasing outsourcing and privatization, which results in fewer military personnel. As the force becomes smaller, the highest caliber officers are needed to fulfill expanding responsibilities. Young officers will assume greater responsibilities sooner than their predecessors. Education and training, therefore, must change to prepare these new officers for the awesome challenges that lie ahead. This paper proposes an alternate approach to officer commissioning that will allow the Air Force to focus on officer training and different officer education.

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Abstract

The Air Force is embarking upon a cultural change to prepare itself to meet the national security challenges of the next millennium. The Air Force's vision for the 21st century – *Global Engagement* – recognizes that it is “transitioning from an air force to an air and space force on an evolutionary path to a space and air force.” However, it is questionable whether the current Air Force officer corps is prepared to make this vision become a reality. The August 1996 Long-Range Planning Survey identified some existing ills with the officer corps such as careerism, identification with technical specialties, lack of knowledge about doctrine and joint war-fighting, and the lack of shared values and experiences with other Air Force officers.

One significant action the Air Force is taking to address these concerns is the establishment of an Air and Space Basic Course (ASBC). Current plans call for ASBC to be a seven-week PME course to “...educate 2 Lts to become Airmen who understand Air and Space Power in support of the Joint Force Commander...” The Air Force intends to have all 2 Lts attend this course within their first year of commissioning.

An ASBC-type education and training experience is imperative; however, ASBC as presently designed is inadequate for the long term. Since an ASBC-type education and training experience is so important for the future Air Force officer corps, it should not be limited to a quick-fix seven-week course. The curriculum should be expanded and made a prerequisite to commissioning; i.e., it should be a pre-commissioning as opposed to a

post-commissioning course. In fact, it is time for the Air Force to change its entire approach to officer commissioning. The Air Force must closely reexamine the need for three officer commissioning sources. This examination should have two overarching objectives. First, all Air Force officer trainees should share a common military education and training experience where they obtain an airman's perspective and have an appreciation for doctrine and joint warfare. Second, and most importantly, this education and training experience must produce Air Force officers who are prepared to deal with a challenging and uncertain future, and who will make the Air Force's vision become a reality.

Chapter 1

Introduction

People are the heart of the Air Force military capability, and people will continue to be the Air Force's most important element in capitalizing on change...Emphasis on creating an Air Force environment that fosters responsiveness and innovation, and rewards adaptability and agility will be crucial as we move into the early part of the next century

-Global Engagement

The United States Air Force has to change the way it does business to meet the challenges of the next millennium. The decisions we make today will determine which of our institutions survive - the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA), one of our most cherished institutions, is at risk. More importantly, the decisions we make today will determine whether our Air Force continues to be the best in the world.

The Air Force must plan now to be prepared for whatever national security challenges lie ahead. Near term threats, as delineated in *A National Security Strategy For A New Century*¹, are daunting enough – “The current era presents a set of threats to our enduring goals and hence our security. These threats are generally grouped into three, often intertwined, categories:

Regional or State-centered Threats: a number of states still have the capabilities and desire to threaten our vital national interests, through either coercion or cross border aggression. In many cases these states are also actively improving their offensive capabilities, including efforts to obtain nuclear, biological or chemical weapons...**Transnational Threats:** such as

terrorism, the illegal drug trade, illicit arms trafficking, international organized crime...threaten American interests and citizens...**Threats from Weapons of Mass Destruction:** pose the greatest potential threat to global security. We must continue to reduce the threat posed by existing arsenals of such weaponry as well as work to stop the proliferation of advanced technologies that place these destructive capabilities in the hands of parties hostile to the U.S.”²

Future national security challenges are likely to be even more varied and, in many cases, more challenging than those known today. Carl Builder, a highly respected Rand Corporation analyst, makes the following predictions about the future.

“The most powerful force shaping the world is the rapid diffusion of power into the hands of individuals, factions, corporations...not necessarily or even mostly identified with nationalism. That more diffuse power is manifested in a variety of forms – political, economic, and destructive – which are increasingly capable of effective challenges to those of the nation-states. The source of that power is to be found mostly in information...Traditional human hierarchies of all kinds – in governments, business, and even in families, wherever they have been erected upon the limitation and control of information – are increasingly being eroded, bypassed, or ignored when they do not serve the causes of those who are subordinated to them.”³

To address near and long term challenges, the U.S. Armed Forces developed *Joint Vision 2010*⁴. In *Joint Vision 2010*, The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff states, “The nature of modern warfare demands that we fight as a joint team. This was important yesterday, it is essential today, and it will be even more important tomorrow. *Joint Vision 2010* provides an operationally based template for the evolution of the Armed Forces for a challenging and uncertain future. It must become a benchmark for Service and Unified Command visions.”⁵ Consequently, the Air Force produced its vision, *Global Engagement*⁶, established a long-range planning function, and produced *Alternate Futures for 2025*.⁷ I believe these documents and actions are positive signs of change because they focus us on our core competencies, provide direction on where we

need to go and, at the same time, get us thinking about the future. However, these documents and actions are only the beginning – we have much to do to make them become reality. Significant paradigm changes will be required.

I believe an important and absolutely necessary aspect of *Global Engagement* is that it recognizes that “we are transitioning from an air force into an air and space force on an evolutionary path to a space and air force.”⁸ The pertinent question then is: How do we make the aforementioned visions become a reality to meet the future national security challenges with current and future fiscal constraints? I believe the answer lies in education and training of Air Force people, particularly the Air Force officer corps. After all, officers are the Air Force’s war-fighters unlike the other Services where the majority of their war-fighters are enlisted personnel.

Unfortunately, the Air Force is not currently preparing its new officers for the challenges that lie ahead. Unless the Air Force fundamentally changes the way it educates and trains new officers, the Air Force will fail to attain its vision. The more the Air Force resists implementing needed education and training reform, the more at risk USAFA becomes. USAFA is more vulnerable than its Army and Navy counterparts because it’s by far the youngest of the three academies and, therefore, has much less tradition to fall back on. However, if the Air Force changes USAFA’s structure now, we can retain it. Otherwise, we may lose it. USAFA’s youth can be become an advantage by making it more adaptable to change – we can take the lead now by making USAFA the most effective and efficient of all the academies.

Absolutely nothing is more important to the U.S. military than its people. Top-notch people are difficult to attract and retain, and the key to everything we do.

Therefore, how we educate and train them is critical! The time has come for us to change the way we do business. Visions and plans are worthless without a properly educated, trained, and motivated force.

This paper will explain why the Air and Space Basic Course must become a permanent part of Air Force officer education and training, and how it can be incorporated without increasing Air Force education and training costs, while at the same time, maintaining USAFA as a viable commissioning source. As a result, new Air Force officers will be better prepared for the future.

Notes

¹ A National Security Strategy For A New Century, May 1997.

² Ibid., pp. 5-6.

³ Builder, Carl, H., *The Icarus Syndrome: The Role of Air Power Theory in the Evolution and Fate of the U.S. Air Force* (Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick USA, and London, UK, 1994), p. 238.

⁴ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Vision 2010*.

⁵ Ibid., Preface.

⁶ *Global Engagement: A Vision for the 21st Century Air Force*.

⁷ *Alternate Futures for 2025: Security Planning to Avoid Surprise*, September 1996.

⁸ *Global Engagement*, p. 7.

Chapter 2

The Need For The Air And Space Basic Course

The instruments of battle are valuable only if you know how to use them.

-Ardant du Picq, Battle Studies

The Air and Space Basic Course is essential for the 21st century Air Force for three primary reasons. First, a new culture is needed to transition the air force to an air and space force on an evolutionary path to a space and air force. Second, resource constraints and increasingly more outsourcing and privatization will result in fewer military personnel, making each military member more valuable. Third, greater jointness will demand that all Air Force officers have an Airman's perspective. These three points will be addressed in detail throughout the remainder of this chapter.

The Air Force needs a new culture that will transition the air force to an air and space force on an evolutionary path to a space and air force. To do so, the Air Force Officer Corps needs to clean up its act. For example, the August 1996 Air Force Long-Range Planning Survey¹ identified some existing ills with the Air Force officer corps. The Long-Range Planning Survey included 278 active duty General Officers. Seventy-eight percent of those surveyed agreed that assignments at warfighting units should be required of all Air Force personnel. Eighty-three percent agreed that to solidify institutional and cultural identity the Air Force should institute more rigorous

standardized “Air Force bluing” orientation training at all sources of commissioning, basic training, and professional military education in residence. Finally, seventy-one percent agreed that all officers, regardless of commissioning source, should attend some common training like the Marine Corps Basic Course. The Air Force officer corps ills identified in the survey included the following:

“Some officers identify with technical specialties. Some officers are careerists. Some officers believe standards and expectations are uneven across the Air Force. Some officers believe they are second-class citizens. Some officers do not consider themselves warriors. Some officers think doctrine is a waste of time. They don’t understand air power or doctrine and they don’t understand the Air Force role in joint warfare. Some officers don’t appreciate military history. Some officers focus on tactics, (but they do) little strategic or operational thinking. All Air Force officers lack shared values and experiences with most other Air Force officers.”²

One could certainly debate the extent to which the aforementioned officer corps ills really exist. I have a more positive view of the Air Force officer corps, but I do believe some, if not all, of the ills exist. I believe most of the ills have institutional roots, such as the Air Force’s functional-oriented organization structure and its heretofore emphasis on specialization. Air Force officers typically go directly from commissioning to specialized schools and then to their initial assignment where they hone their new found skills. Often, the first time they attend a school with multi-functional representation is Squadron Officer School (SOS) – four to seven years after commissioning. For those who do not attend SOS in residence, they may never get the opportunity. If they do, it will be several years later. Clearly, a change in the Air Force’s approach to initial officer education is warranted. However, such a change will not be easy in light of existing and future resource constraints.

Fewer resources and increasingly more outsourcing and privatization will result in fewer military personnel. The overall Defense budget has declined from 5.5 percent of GDP in 1991 to 3.4 percent in 1997. It is expected to be 3.3 percent of GDP in 1998. Of course, the Air Force part of the Defense budget has followed suit. During this same period, Air Force active duty military personnel have been reduced from 510,000 in 1991 to 381,000 in 1997, and it is projected to drop to 372,000 in 1998.³ In addition, the Air Force's "...commitment to an aggressive program of civilianizing many combat support functions, as well as outsourcing and privatization, will push more support functions into the private sector."⁴ The trend is clear – smaller budgets and active duty strength reductions are likely to continue. Consequently, joint war-fighting is not only effective, it is also imperative for a smaller force structure if we are to maintain our combat power.

The following quote from General Fogleman hits the nail on the head.

"Greater jointness will demand that all Air Force officers have an Airman's perspective. The ultimate goal of our doctrine should be the development of an airman's perspective on joint warfare and national security issues – not just among our generals, but among all airmen, in all specialties. At the strategic-level, our mid- to senior-level leaders need to understand potential political implications of various air power employment options. All airmen should understand – and be able to explain – what it means when we say that the Air Force offers the nation economy-of-force options for achieving our national interests. And yes, airmen should be well versed in air power theory – although this is more an issue of education than doctrine. At the operational level, our doctrine should provide the framework for theater air employment – to include how we integrate the efforts of Army, Navy, and Marine systems with our combat assets."⁵

In light of the foregoing, the Air Force's vision to evolve into a "space and air force" is all the more significant. Although the vision is bold because it will require a change in culture, I believe such a change is absolutely essential. Space should become our primary mission in the near future but our steadfast commitment to air breathing

assets will be troublesome to say the least. In other words, stating a vision and making it become a reality are two very different things. Cultural change is difficult at best, and often results in failure. Even when successful, it can take several years or even decades to institutionalize such a change. People become comfortable with recent successes and the status quo and are, therefore, resistant to change.

As the force becomes smaller, the need for the highest caliber officers will become greater because each officer will assume more responsibilities. Young officers will assume greater responsibilities sooner than their predecessors. Education and training, therefore, must change to prepare these new officers for the awesome challenges that lie ahead. While continued senior officer support for change will be necessary, young officers are the keys to success. They are unencumbered by the past and more adaptable to change. In addition, they are the ones who will have to accomplish the mission in a challenging and uncertain future. After all, they will be the senior officers of 2015, 2020, and beyond. Consequently, I'm absolutely convinced that an Air and Space Basic Course (ASBC) is imperative, and should be mandatory for all new officers. I believe such a course is so important, it should be a prerequisite to commissioning. However, ASBC as currently designed is inadequate and mis-aligned. I will explain why this is the case in the next chapter.

Notes

¹ United States Air Force Long Range Planning Survey, August 1996.

² Ibid.

³ Air Force Magazine, "The Air Force in Facts and Figures," May 1997.

⁴ *Global Engagement: A Vision for the 21st Century Air Force*, p. 23.

⁵ Fogleman, Gen Ronald R., chief of staff, US Air Force. Address. Air Force Doctrine Seminar, Maxwell AFB, AL., April 1996.

Chapter 3

Problem Stated

If we should have to fight, we should be prepared to do so from the neck up instead of from the neck down.

-Jimmy Doolittle

While an ASBC-type education and training experience is imperative for the 21st century Air Force, ASBC as currently designed is inadequate for the long term. ASBC has serious capacity constraints, would interfere with officer specialized training, and its curriculum is not sufficiently comprehensive. Therefore, the problem is larger and the solution significantly more important than simply adding a quick-fix seven-week PME course. We need an entirely new approach – an effective long-term solution.

Current plans call for ASBC to be conducted at Maxwell AFB, Alabama. Originally, Air Force senior leadership wanted all new officer accessions to attend ASBC within 90 days of commissioning. While this goal was commendable, facility constraints at Maxwell AFB will not allow it. Approximately 6,000 officer accessions per year for the next several years are expected.¹ With Officer Training School, Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College, Air War College, and other schools and permanent party personnel, adequate facilities for ASBC are not available at Maxwell AFB. Since a seven-week ASBC course is contemplated, six classes per year is a realistic maximum; therefore, approximately 1,000 students per class would be required

to get all new officers through the course during their first year of commissioning. To conduct six classes per year with existing facility constraints, SOS would have to be curtailed according to the ASBC Deputy Commander.² Since SOS capacity has already been reduced due to OTS use of its facility, further reduction in SOS is problematic. This has forced the ASBC leadership to investigate the possibility of building new facilities. While new facilities may be a possible solution, they're also expensive.

One could argue that SOS should be eliminated, but I don't think that's prudent. If SOS were eliminated, the first PME for an officer after ASBC would be Air Command and Staff College, 10 or more years later. Ten or more years between PME seems to be at odds with the need to have a highly educated, motivated, and capable officer corps with an airman's perspective and an appreciation for jointness.

Assuming the Air Force does accommodate 1,000 students per ASBC class and six classes per year, such a scheme would be disruptive to officer specialized training. This is not to say that specialized training is more important than ASBC. The issue becomes what to do with new officers who don't attend the first ASBC class each year. Unless their specialized school is relatively short, most of these officers would have to go to their initial base of assignment without any specialized training. Then they would go TDY to ASBC and TDY again after ASBC to attend their specialized school. If nothing else, this approach will be expensive and a scheduling nightmare for the Air Force.

Considering the limitations they have inherited, the ASBC leadership and staff have done a commendable job putting ASBC together. The ASBC curriculum has the right focus:

“ASBC will educate 2 Lts to become Airmen who understand the use of Air and Space Power in support of the Joint Force Commander. At the end of

this course, they should understand the Airman's perspective and how it differs from the soldier's and sailor's perspectives. In addition, they must understand how Airmen should use all aspects of US Air and Space Power, not just USAF Air and Space Power, to support National Security Objectives...ASBC will also reinforce the need for all officers to understand the critical link between officership, core values, and mission success...”³

The course is expected to be 46 academic days long. With an 8-day field exercise, in-processing, and graduation, there are 36 days of academic time.⁴ The initial apportionment of the course is Operations and Doctrine – 93 hours, History/Core Competencies – 73 hours, Core Values/Ethics and Teambuilding – 40 hours, and Administration/Quizzes – 10 hours.⁵

I explained in Chapter 2 why I believe an ASBC-like course is imperative for the Air Force's future. Since such a course is so important, it should not be limited to 7 weeks because of facility constraints. Although ASBC has the right focus and course content, the course should be expanded. In addition, I believe completing the course should be a prerequisite for commissioning rather than a post-commissioning course. Current plans call for the course to be demanding, and I wholeheartedly agree. Consequently, some will not pass the course. Do we really want to keep officers who don't pass the course? I don't think so.

In essence, ASBC as currently designed is inadequate to prepare new officers for the future. Sufficient facilities are not available, the course is not comprehensive enough, and the course is misplaced; i.e., it should be incorporated into a pre-commissioning program in lieu of a stand-alone post-commissioning course. Therefore, let's look at the larger question. From where and how Air Force officers are made. Let's examine existing Air Force commissioning programs, the subject of the next chapter.

Notes

¹ Air War College Air and Space Basic Course Elective, Class Discussions, September/October 1997.

² Ibid.

³ Eisen, Lt Col Stefan Jr., commander, Air and Space Basic Course. Memorandum for record. Subject: Education Philosophy/Methodologies and Apportionment Document for ASBC, 9 July 97.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

Chapter 4

System Analysis

Visionary and innovative thinking is not just reserved for senior leadership, but must be understood and practiced at every level for an organization to continue to thrive.

-Air Force Quality Institute

Does the Air Force still need three officer commissioning sources? With smaller budgets, fewer military personnel, and the growing need for future weapon system modernization, the answer to this question is becoming increasingly more important. New problems deserve new solutions and today's commissioning programs grew as answers to old challenges. This chapter will provide an analysis of the three officer commissioning sources: the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA), the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC), and Officer Training School (OTS). I'll begin with a description of each commissioning source and their inherent advantages and disadvantages. Next, I'll describe the composition of the active-duty officer corps and the number and percentages per grade by commissioning source. Finally, I'll identify their respective costs for producing an officer.

Before we undertake this analysis, we should make note that both the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and the U. S. Naval Academy at Annapolis were established to meet specific educational needs. The Military Academy was established in part to produce engineers, particularly construction engineers. Likewise, the Naval Academy was built to

ensure this new nation would be a naval powerhouse and, therefore, seamanship was a primary goal – education was focused on scientific pursuits such as mathematics and navigation. After the Air Force became independent in 1947 and suffered the lessons of the Korean War, USAFA was established in 1954 to mature this new Service and provide a new kind of professional Airman-Soldier. According to the January 1949 Air Force Academy Planning Study,

“It is contemplated that the Air Force Academy would be an undergraduate institution conferring a B.S. Degree upon those successfully completing the course of instruction. The curriculum would be designed to offer a broad general education as well as a sound background in aeronautical science and tactics, a requirement unique to the Air Force...”¹

USAFA

“The staff and faculty of the United States Air Force Academy are charged with developing and inspiring future air and space leaders with vision for tomorrow.”² The bill authorizing establishment of the Academy was signed 1 April 1954. The first class began at temporary facilities at Lowry AFB, Colorado. The Cadet Wing moved into its permanent home at Colorado Springs, Colorado, in August 1958. The first class graduated in June 1959. More than 29,500 cadets have graduated in 38 classes. Approximately 51 percent of those commissioned in the Air Force are still on active duty.³

“Cadets complete four years of studies leading to a Bachelor of Science degree. Emphasis is given to academics, military training, athletic conditioning, and spiritual and ethical development. Academics include classes in the basic sciences, engineering, the humanities and the social sciences...Cadets can major in any of 25 academic majors.”⁴

“Cadet course load (132-148 semester hours) is a good deal heavier than most other colleges. The core curriculum consists of 93 semester hours, with an even balance between basic sciences and engineering sciences on the one hand and social sciences and humanities on the other.”⁵

Advantages

USAFA has the most comprehensive military education and training curriculum of the three commissioning sources. A gap analysis⁶ performed by the ASBC staff revealed that USAFA’s military-related curriculum is more than four times greater than that of AFROTC and OTS. Approximately 10 months of USAFA’s 4-year curriculum is military specific.

Another advantage of USAFA is that cadets share a common long-term experience in a military-like environment. This environment allows cadets to “grow militarily, intellectually, physically, and morally/ethically.”⁷ This experience creates a life-long bond among academy classmates.

Disadvantages

One disadvantage of USAFA is its cost to produce an officer. This cost is significantly more than AFROTC and OTS. A cost comparison of all three commissioning sources is provided later in this chapter.

Another USAFA disadvantage is its inflexibility; i.e., it takes at least four years to produce an officer. In addition, since cadets must complete a challenging undergraduate degree program before becoming an officer, the primary emphasis is on their non-military curriculum. This emphasis tends to detract from their military-related education and training.

Since legislation has limited cadet wing strength (currently limited to 4,000), each graduating class has typically been less than 1,000. To date, this yearly output has fallen far

short of meeting total Air Force officer accession requirements. Therefore, the Air Force has continued to rely on its oldest commissioning source – AFROTC.

AFROTC

The mission of AFROTC is to “Produce leaders for the Air Force and build better citizens for America.”⁸ “The National Defense Act of 1916 established ROTC. The first Air Service Officer Training Corps units were formed four years later, and by 1923 seven ROTC units had been established. After WWII, Air Service ROTC units were organized at 78 colleges and universities throughout the nation. In 1952, Air University assumed responsibility for the AFROTC program, which consisted of four-year programs at 188 academic institutions. The ROTC Vitalization Act of 1964 authorized a new two-year senior program, scholarships, and a junior program...Today, AFROTC is under the supervision of Air University and Air Education and Training Command. The 144 AFROTC units are located at colleges and universities in the United States and Puerto Rico. Students from colleges located near these host AFROTC institutions can attend classes through approximately 789 cross-town enrollment programs and consortium agreements.”⁹ From 1948 through 1996, AFROTC has produced 208,093 Air Force officers.¹⁰ Therefore, AFROTC has produced approximately 84,500 more officers than USAFA and OTS combined.

A significant school financial aid program is the AFROTC College Scholarship Program.¹¹ The Air Force awards approximately 4,200 of these scholarships which pay benefits for as many as four years, or for only one academic year.¹² “These highly competitive awards pay for all tuition, required texts, laboratory and incidental fees, and a \$150 monthly stipend. All scholarship recipients are obligated to enter the Air Force in their

specific commissioning category for a minimum of four years. To receive the scholarship, qualifying undergraduate major fields of study usually center on the science and engineering fields and are stipulated by the Air Force.”¹³

Advantages

One advantage of the AFROTC program is its ability to recruit promising young men and women directly from several of our college and university campuses. This citizen-soldier link is consistent with American history and a concept advocated by our founding fathers.¹⁴

Another advantage of AFROTC is that it provides more of a cross-section of American society which tends to lessen concerns about an elitist officer corps.

Disadvantages

One disadvantage of AFROTC is the part-time nature of its military-related education and training. Typically, cadets attend one military class per week during the school year. While all cadets must attend a basic training-like field encampment (one four-week camp for three and four year cadets, one six-week camp for one and two year cadets) their primary emphasis - like USAFA cadets - is obtaining their undergraduate degrees.

Another disadvantage of AFROTC is its inflexibility. Although more flexible than USAFA, it takes at least one year (usually two to four years) to produce an officer. Also, there's the all too frequent delay between commissioning and reporting to active duty.¹⁵ This tends to be a de-motivator for a new officer.

Finally, the 144 on-campus ROTC units can't cover all of our nation's fine colleges and universities. There are 2,190 four-year degree-granting institutions in the United States.¹⁶ OTS, on the other hand, accepts qualified candidates from any accredited college or university.

OTS

“The mission of OTS is to train and commission quality officers for the United States Air Force.”¹⁷ Air Force OTS was activated on 1 July 1959 at Lackland AFB, Texas. The school moved to the Lackland Training Annex in 1961. On 22 September 1993, OTS graduated its last class at Lackland AFB. OTS began a new era at Maxwell AFB, Alabama, on 25 September 1993.¹⁸

To date, more than 94,000 officers have entered the Air Force through OTS. Since 1959, OTS has functioned as a flexible commissioning program to meet the constantly changing manning requirements of the Air Force. Additionally, the school now trains medical service officers, lawyers, and chaplains.¹⁹

OTS’ two primary training programs are Basic Officer Training and Commissioned Officer Training. The former leads to a commission as a Second Lieutenant. The latter provides post-commissioning officer orientation for medical officers, lawyers and chaplains.²⁰ Since the focus of my paper is on basic officer training, I’ll provide a summary of that aspect of OTS.

OTS Basic Officer Training “...is an intensive 13.5 week program that commissions men and women who meet Air Force commissioning standards. The program is for college graduates who haven’t completed a commissioning program and who are selected for training on the basis of character, academic accomplishments, work experience, and leadership potential. The program guides officer trainees through a transition to commissioned service in the Air Force or Air Force Reserve and teaches fundamental military knowledge and skill needed for effective performance.”²¹

Advantages

A significant advantage of OTS is its flexibility. It only takes OTS 13.5 weeks to produce an officer. OTS also has the unique ability to quickly increase or decrease the number of officer trainees, and specific degree types based on Air Force needs. Finally, since OTS trainees already have an undergraduate degree, they can focus all their efforts on OTS' military education and training curriculum.

Disadvantages

OTS's intensive education and training curriculum has been effective in producing disciplined and motivated officers. However, 13.5 weeks is not long enough to produce officers with an airman's perspective who have an appreciation for history and an understanding of Air Force doctrine, core competencies, and the Air Force role in joint war-fighting.

The above provides a general overview of the three Air Force officer commissioning sources. As you analyze these commissioning sources, there is a tendency to attempt to conclude which source produces the best officers for the Air Force. I suppose the popular response would be USAFA. This may or may not be the case, but it's also not the point. All three commissioning sources have advantages and disadvantages. Suffice it to say that all three sources have produced quality Air Force officers. I believe the following tables prove this point:

Table 1. Active Duty USAF Officers By Commissioning Source²²

Source of Commission	Number of Officers	Percent of Total
USAFA	14,628	19.6%
ROTC	31,270	41.8%
OTS	15,096	20.2%
OTHER	<u>13,748</u>	<u>18.4%</u>
Totals	74,742	100%

Table 2. Active Duty USAF Officers By Grade²³

	<u>2LT</u>	<u>1LT</u>	<u>CPT</u>	<u>MAJ</u>	<u>LTC</u>	<u>COL</u>
USAFA	1672-24.8%	1920-24.4%	6381-21.2%	2116-13.2%	1852-18.2%	687-17.6%
ROTC	3338-49.6%	3256-41.4%	12961-43.1%	5979-37.4%	4121-40.5%	1615-41.5%
OTS	1193-17.7%	1459-18.6%	4634-15.4%	4538-28.4%	2486-24.4%	786-20.2%
OTHER	<u>533-7.9%</u>	<u>1223-15.6%</u>	<u>6123-20.3%</u>	<u>3341-20.9%</u>	<u>1723-16.9%</u>	<u>805-20.7%</u>
Total*	6736	7858	30099	15974	10182	3893

*This line represents the total number of personnel by grade; i.e., 100% per grade.

Table 3. Active Duty USAF General Officers By Commissioning Source²⁴

USAFA	74	26.2%
OTS	59	20.9%
AFROTC	137	48.6%
OTHER	<u>12</u>	<u>4.3%</u>
TOTAL	282	100%

Clearly, the three commissioning sources are well represented in all ranks. The data certainly supports my earlier assertion that all three commissioning sources produce quality Air Force officers. Further, no one source seems to have any particular advantage moving through the ranks. Another issue worthy of analysis is the respective costs of producing an officer.

Cost Comparison

The latest published data I obtained on the respective costs of all three commissioning sources was 1993. Average cost per commissionee that fiscal year (FY) was "USAFA: \$247,553, ROTC: \$65,800, and OTS: \$28,000."²⁵ AFROTC figures are published through 1996.²⁶ The ROTC average cost per commissionee from FY94 through FY96 was \$77,300, \$86,200, and \$83,483 respectively. The USAFA states that the average cost to put a cadet through the four-year program is \$250,000.²⁷ Clearly, the cost per commissionee fluctuates due to inflation and the number of graduates in a particular fiscal year. Of course, the cost tends to increase.

Based on my discussions with personnel from the Air Force Officer Accessions and Training Schools (AFOATS) at Maxwell AFB, OTS figures have not been updated since OTS moved to Maxwell in 1993. They plan to calculate those figures within the next few months. I asked them if they had a point of contact at USAFA to see if figures were available for USAFA for FY94 through FY96. AFOATS later provided the following cost per commissionee figures for USAFA: FY94 - \$276,413, FY95 - \$282,880, and FY96 - \$293,953.

For comparison purposes, it would be helpful to see the aforementioned costs in Table form. Since OTS figures have not been updated since FY93, I will inflate OTS' FY93 cost per commissionee figure (\$28,000) based upon USAFA's percentage increase from FY 94-96; i.e., 11.66%, 14.27%, and 18.74% respectively.

Table 4. Costs To Produce An Officer

	USAFA	AFROTC	OTS
FY 93	\$247,553	\$65,800	\$28,000
FY94	\$276,413	\$77,300	\$31,265
FY95	\$282,880	\$86,200	\$31,996
FY96	\$293,953	\$83,483	\$33,247

I believe several conclusions can be drawn from the information presented thus far in this chapter. First, all three commissioning sources have proud traditions. Second, all three have performed their missions admirably - they have produced quality officers for the Air Force. AFROTC has produced the most officers followed by OTS and then USAFA. Finally, the costs for each commissionee were reviewed. USAFA is by far the most expensive followed by AFROTC and OTS. OTS is by far the least costly principally because its candidates already have college degrees. USAFA grants undergraduate degrees and has a more robust military education and training program than the other sources. AFROTC provides scholarship funding to promising cadets and has on-campus military instructors. USAFA and OTS each have one central location.

In light of fiscal constraints, a challenging and uncertain future, and the need for an ASBC-type course, should the Air Force continue to have three officer commissioning

sources? I don't think so. The Air Force must adapt to meet future demands. I will address an alternate commissioning method in the next chapter.

Notes

¹ Air Force Academy Planning Board Study, Volume I: *A Plan For An Air Force Academy*, Headquarters Air University, January 1949, p. 5.

² Fact Sheets, United States Air Force Academy Home Page.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Porter, Lt Col Dennis C., vice commander, Air and Space Basic Course. Memorandum for record. Subject: Gap Analysis Framework, 4 June 1997.

⁷ Fact Sheets, United States Air Force Academy Home Page.

⁸ Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps Commandant's Notebook, April 1997, p. 1.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 29.

¹¹ Royce, Lt Col Charles A., *The United States Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps: Looking to the Future* (An Individual Study Project, U.S. Army War College), 4 March 1991, p. 7.

¹² Commandant's Notebook, p. 14.

¹³ Royce, Lt Col Charles A., p. 7.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.14

¹⁶ *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, US Department of Commerce, 116th Edition.

¹⁷ Officer Training School Home Page

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Air Force Personnel Center Home Page, 31 August 1997.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Telephone Conversation, office of General Officer Matters, Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, 13 November 1997.

²⁵ Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps Fact Book, April 1997, p. 22.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Fact Sheets, United States Air Force Academy Home Page.

Chapter 5

Solution Proposed

The public has a right to expect our PME schools to produce experts on warfare, not peacetime bureaucrats in uniform.

-Colonel Dennis M. Drew
USAF, Retired

It's time for the Air Force to change its approach to officer commissioning. Unquestionably, this will require a paradigm change. I will briefly describe an alternate approach that will better prepare young officers for the future. In addition, I believe this can be done for less cost than commissioning today while preserving USAFA as a commissioning source.

First, I think the Air Force should get out of the degree granting business. While the USAF clearly has done a commendable job granting degrees at USAFA, this should not be a core competency. The Air Force should leave undergraduate education to our civilian colleges and universities – after all, they are the best in the world. As we outsource and privatize other Air Force support functions, we should do the same with undergraduate education. It is not our job to grant degrees. Rather, our job is to educate and train young officers to meet the national security challenges of the future – ultimately to fight and win our nation's wars.

Second, we should significantly reduce AFROTC overhead by establishing a regional AFROTC presence in lieu of having faculty permanently located at certain colleges and universities. AFROTC's approach should change from teaching courses to recruiting cadets. Further, this recruiting effort should be expanded to include a much larger base of colleges and universities than AFROTC does today. The scholarship program, therefore, should increase to ensure we have the ability to recruit top-notch candidates late in high school or early in college.

Third, OTS should be eliminated as a separate commissioning source. In fact, there should be only one Air Force commissioning source where all candidates already have degrees and then share a common military education and training experience – the education and training must be demanding to prepare our officers for the next millennium. This one commissioning source should contain some aspects of the three existing commissioning sources. The following is what I propose.

The Air Force should establish a challenging 10-month officer-commissioning program. Like USAFA and OTS, this program should be composed of military training, discipline, and physical fitness. It must also contain an expanded ASBC-type education curriculum. The program must instill an Airmen's perspective while building an appreciation for the Soldier's and Sailor's perspectives. Therefore, this education must ensure that candidates understand Air Force doctrine, core competencies, and how they contribute to the joint team.

I believe this program should be conducted at Colorado Springs, Colorado, using existing facilities at USAFA. This way, all candidates for a particular year group can attend the program at one time. It will be a common experience for all future Air Force

officers. Everyone starts from the same sheet of music. All are Air Force officers and warriors first. This intensive combination of military education and training will culminate in commissioning for those who make it through the program. Those who graduate and receive their commissions will receive operational and support assignments. All will attend specialized training only after a common core educational experience. “Air Force bluing” and core values training will have occurred first and become an innate part of their officership. This approach should go a long way to eliminate the current “Air Force officer corps ills” described by the Long-Range Planning Survey referenced in Chapter 2 of this paper.

A subsidiary benefit of this new program will be its cost. Significant cost savings should result from (1) USAFA getting out of the four-year degree granting business, (2) AFROTC’s overhead reduction, and (3) elimination of OTS as a separate institution. These savings should more than offset the cost for additional scholarships and the increased number of cadets who will attend the new program at Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Cultural change takes time but it also takes effort. Changing the way the Air Force educates, trains, and commissions its officers is a giant step in the right direction.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

In short, to respond to the security challenges of a new era, the U.S. will have to restructure itself to compete in different conflict environments, and within a different time horizon, than it did during the Cold War.

-Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr.
Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

As I stated in Chapter 1, *Joint Vision 2010* and *Global Engagement* are positive signs that our nation's Armed Forces and our Air Force are setting the stage for change to meet future challenges to our national security. I believe the keys to realizing the visions are education and training.

I explained why an ASBC-type curriculum must become a permanent part of Air Force officer pre-commissioning. I provided an overview of the three existing Air Force officer-commissioning programs, the composition of the current active-duty officer corps, and the numbers and percentages officers per grade by commissioning source. I established the fact that all three commissioning sources provide quality officers to the Air Force. I also provided a comparison of their respective costs for producing an officer. Finally, I described an alternative commissioning program that I believe will better prepare future officers at less cost than commissioning sources do now while, at

the same time, preserving USAFA as a different but more effective and efficient institution.

I realize that my proposal to restructure USAFA, cut back and re-orient AFROTC, and eliminate OTS will seem like heresy to some. I offer this proposal with no disrespect to any of these institutions – they clearly have fulfilled their missions by providing quality officers to the Air Force. However, the Air Force is changing, and our education and training must follow suit. ASBC was conceived because our senior leadership believes a cultural change is needed to correct some existing ills with the officer corps. I believe these ills are, in large part, institutionally based. All the more reason for change, a cultural change that produces all Air Force officers from the same commissioning source – USAFA, our academy – where all are Air Force officers and warriors first and foremost. While this proposal may seem radical, I believe it is no more radical than *Global Engagement*'s statement that “we are transitioning from an air force to an air and space force on an evolutionary path to a space and air force.”¹ If the Air Force is not tied too much to the past and present, the transition to a space and air force has a chance to succeed. The same is true of a proposal like mine to change officer commissioning.

Notes

¹ *Global Engagement: A Vision for the 21st Century Air Force.*

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